



# 54-40 OR FIGHT BY EMERSON HOUGH AUTHOR OF THE MISSISSIPPI BUBBLE ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAGNUS G. KETNER COPYRIGHT 1925 BY BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY



## SYNOPSIS.

Senator John Calhoun is offered the portfolio of secretary of state in Tyler's cabinet. He declares that if he accepts it means that Texas and Oregon must be added to the Union. He plans to learn the intentions of England with regard to Mexico, through Baroness Von Ritz, secret spy and reputed mistress of the English ambassador, Pakenham. He sends his secretary, Nicholas Trist, to bring the baroness to his apartment. While searching for the baroness' home, a carriage drives up and he is invited to enter. The occupant is the baroness, who says she is being pursued. The pursuers are shaken off. The baroness consents to see Calhoun. Nicholas notes that she has lost a slipper. She gives Nicholas the remaining slipper as a pledge that she will tell Calhoun all, and, as security, Nicholas gives her a trinket he intended for his sweetheart, Elizabeth Churchill. Nicholas is ordered to leave at once for Montreal on state business, by Calhoun, who has become secretary of state, and plans to be married that night. Tyler warns Pakenham that interference by England in the affairs of this continent will not be tolerated. The west demands that the Texas occupancy of Oregon with Great Britain cease, and has raised the cry of "Fifty-four, Forty or Fight." The baroness tells Nicholas she will do her best to prevent his marriage. She returns the trinket and she promises to return her slipper. Nicholas enlists the services of Congressman Cambridge, a rejected suitor of Elizabeth's, to assist in the arrangements for the wedding and entrusts him with the return of the slipper to the baroness. The congressman gets drunk and sends the slipper to Elizabeth. The wedding is declared off, and Nicholas is ordered from the house by Elizabeth's father. Nicholas is ordered to gain access to a meeting of the Hudson Bay directors in Montreal and learn England's intentions regarding Oregon. Nicholas sees the baroness at the directors' meeting in Montreal, where he had failed to gain admission. She warns him that his life is in danger and he accepts an invitation to pass the night at her home.

## CHAPTER XVI.—Continued.

"Yet you spoke of others who might come here. What others? Who are they? The representatives of Mexico? Some attaché of the British embassy at Washington? Some minister from England itself, sent here direct?"

She smiled at me again. "I told you not to go back to your hotel, did I not?"

I got no further with her, it seemed. "You interest me sometimes," she went on slowly, at last, "yet you seem to have so little brain! Now, in your employment, I should think that brain would be somewhat useful at times."

"I do not deny that suggestion, madam."

"But you are unable to analyze. Thus, in the matter of yourself, I suppose if you were told of it, you would only say that you forgot to look in the toe of the slipper you had."

"Did you credit the attaché of Mexico with being nothing more than a drunken rowdy, to follow me across town with a little shoe in his carriage?"

"But you said he was in wine."

"True. But would that be a reason? Continually you show your lack of brain in accepting as conclusive results which could not possibly have occurred. Granted he was in wine, granted he followed me, granted he had my shoe in his possession—what then? Does it follow that at the ball at the White House he could have removed that shoe? Does monsieur think that I, too, was in wine?"

"I agree that I have no brain! I cannot guess what you mean. I can only beg one more that you explain."

"Now listen. In your most youthful and charming innocence I presume you do not know much of the capabilities for concealment offered by a lady's apparel! Now, suppose I had a message—where do you think I could hide it; granted, of course, the conditions obtaining at a ball in the White House?"

"Then you did have a message? It came to you there, at that time?"

She nodded. "Certainly, Mr. Van Zandt had almost no other opportunity to meet me or get word to me."

"Van Zandt! Madam, are you indeed in the camp of all these different interests? So, what Pakenham said was true! Van Zandt is the attaché of Texas. Van Zandt is pleading with Mr. Calhoun that he shall take up the secretaryship. Van Zandt promises us the friendship of Texas if we will stand out for the annexation of Texas. Van Zandt promises us every effort in his power against England. Van Zandt promises us the sternest of fronts against treacherous Mexico. Van Zandt is known to be interested in this fair Dona Lucrezia, just as Polk is. Now, then, comes Van Zandt with his secret message slipped into the hand of madam at the ambassador's ball—madam, the friend of England! The attaché of Mexico is curious—furious—to know what Texas is saying to England! And that message must be concealed! And madam conceals it in—"

She smiled at me brilliantly. "You come on," she said. "Should your head be opened and analyzed, yes, I think a trace of brain might be discovered by good chemistry."

I resumed impatiently. "You put his message in your slipper?"

She nodded. "Yes," she said, "in the toe of it. There was barely chance so that you see, our skirts are full and wide; there are curtains in the east room; there was wine by this time; there was music; so I effected that much. But when you took



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the slipper, you took Van Zandt's note! You had it. It was true, what I told Pakenham before the president—I did not then have that note! You had it. At least, I thought you had it, till I found it crumpled on the table the next day! It must have fallen there from the shoe when we made our little exchange that night. Ah, you hurried me. I scarce knew whether I was clad or shod, until the next afternoon—after I left you at the White House grounds. So you hastily departed—to your wedding?"

"So small a shoe could not have held an extended epistle, madam," I said, ignoring her question.

"No, but the little roll of paper caused me anguish. After I had danced I was on the point of fainting. I hastened to the cover of the nearest curtain, where I might not be noticed. Senor Yturrio of Mexico was somewhat vigilant. He wished to know what Texas planned with England. He has long made love to me—by threats, and jewels. As I stood behind the curtain I saw his face, I fled; but one shoe—the empty one—was not well fastened, and it fell. I could not walk. I reached down, removed the other shoe with its note, hid it in my handkerchief—thank Providence for the fashion of so much lace—and so, not in wine, monsieur, as you may believe, and somewhat anxious, as you may also believe, expecting to hear at once of an encounter between Van Zandt and the Mexican minister, Senor Almonte, or his attaché Yturrio, or between one of them and some one else, I made my adieu—I will warrant the only woman in her stocking feet who bowed for Mr. Tyler at the ball that night!"

"Yes, so far as I know, madam, you are the only lady who ever left the east room precisely so clad. And so you got into your own carriage—alone—after awhile? And so, when you were there you put on the shoe which was left? And so Yturrio of Mexico got the other one—and found nothing in it! And so, he wanted this one!"

"You come on," she said. "You have something more than a trace of brain."

"And that other shoe, which I got that night?"

Without a word she smoothed out a bit of paper which she removed from a near-by desk, and handed it to me.

"This was in yours! As I said, in my confusion I supposed you had it. I spread the page upon the cloth before me; my eyes raced down the lines. I did not make further reply to her."

"Madam," went on the communication, "say to your august friend Sir Richard that we have reached the end of our endurance of these late delays. The promises of the United States mean nothing. We can trust neither Whig nor Democrat any longer. There is no one party in power, nor will there be. There are two sections in America and there is no nation, and Texas knows not where to go. We have offered to Mr. Tyler to join the union if the union will allow us to join. We intend to reserve our own lands and reserve the right to organize later into four or more states, if our people shall so desire. But as a great state we will join the union if the union will accept us. That must be seen."

"England now beseeches us not to

enter the union, but to stand apart, either for independence or for alliance with Mexico and England. The proposition has been made to us to divide into two governments, one free and one slave. England has proposed to us to advance us moneys to pay all our debts if we will agree to this. Settled by bold men from our mother country, the republic, Texas has been averse to this. But now, our own mother repudiates us, not once but many times. We get no decision. This then, dear madam, is from Texas to England by your hand, and we know you will carry it safe and secret. We shall accept this proposal of England, and avail ourselves of the richness of her generosity."

"If within thirty days action is not taken in Washington for the annexation of Texas, Texas will never in the history of the world be one of the United States. Moreover, if the United States shall lose Texas, also they lose Oregon, and all of Oregon. Carry this news—I am persuaded that it will be welcome—to that gentleman whose ear I know you have; and believe me always, my dear madam, with respect and admiration, yours, for the state of Texas, Van Zandt."

I drew a deep breath as I saw this proof of double play on the part of this representative of the republic of the southwest. "They are traitors!" I exclaimed. "But there must be action—something must be done at once. I must not wait; I must go! I must take this, at least, to Mr. Calhoun."

"Have I been fair with you thus far?" she asked at length.

"More than fair. I could not have asked this of you. In an hour I have learned the news of years. But will you not also tell me what is the news from Chateau Ramezay? Then, indeed, I could go home feeling I had done very much for my chief."

"Monsieur, I cannot do so. You will not tell me that other news."

"Of what?"

"Of your nuptials!"

"Madam, I cannot do so. But for you, much as I owe you, I would like to wring your neck. I would like to take your arms in my hands and crush them, until—"

"Until what?" Her face was strange. I saw a hand raised to her throat.

"Until you told me about Oregon," said I.

I saw her arms move—just one instant—her body incline. She gazed at me steadily, somberly. Then her hands fell.

"Ah, God! how I hate you both!" she said; "you and her. You were married, after all! Yes, it can be, it can be! A woman may love one man—even though he could give her only a bed of husks! And a man may love a woman, too—one woman. I had no choice."

"Monsieur, adieu!" she added swiftly. I bent and kissed her hand.

"Madam, au revoir!"

"No, adieu! Go!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

A Hunter of Butterflies.  
I love men, not because they are men, but because they are not women.—Queen Christina.

There was at that time in Montreal a sort of news room and public exchange, which made a place of general meeting. It was supplied with newspapers and the like, and kept up

by subscriptions of the town merchants—a spacious room made out of the old Methodist chapel on St. Joseph street. I knew this for a place of town gossip, and hoped I might hit upon something to aid me in my errand, which was no more than to see, it seemed. Entering the place shortly before noon, I made pretense of reading, all the while with an eye and an ear out for anything that might happen.

As I stared in pretense at the page before me, I fumbled idly in a pocket, with unthinking hand, and brought out to place before me on the table, an object of which at first I was unconscious—the little Indian blanket clasp. As it lay before me I felt seized of a sudden hatred for it, and let fall on it a heavy hand. As I did so, I heard a voice at my ear.

"Mein Gott, man, do not! You break it, surely!"

I started at this. I had not heard any one approach. I discovered now that the speaker had taken a seat near me at the table, and could not fail to see this object which lay before me.

"I beg pardon," he said, in a broken speech which showed his foreign birth; "but it is so beautiful; to break it is wrong."

I pushed the trinket along the table towards him.

"'Tis of little value," I said, "and is always in the way when I would find anything in my pocket."

"But once some one has made it; once it has been valued. Tell me where you got it?"

"North of the Platte, in our western territories," I said. "I once traded in that country."

"You are American?"

"Yes."

"So," he said thoughtfully. "So. A great country, a very great country. Me, I also live in it."

"Indeed?" I said. "In what part?"

"It is five years since I cross the Rockies."

"You have crossed the Rockies? I envy you."

"You misunderstand me. I live west of them for five years. I am now come east."

I was afraid my eyes showed my interest; but he went on.

"I had been in the Columbia country, and in the Willamette country, where most of your Americans are settled. I know somewhat of California. Mr. Howard, of the Hudson Bay Company, knows also of the country of California. He said to those English gentlemen at our meeting last night that England should have something to offset California on the west coast; because, though Mexico claims California, the Yankees really rule there, and will rule there yet more. He is right; but they laughed at him."

"Oh, I think little will come of all this talk," I said carelessly. "It is very far, out to Oregon." Yet all the time my heart was leaping. So he had been there, at that very meeting of which I could learn nothing!

"You know not what you say. A thousand men came into Oregon last year. It is like one of the great migrations of the peoples of Asia, of Europe. I say to you, it is a great epoch. There is a folk-movement such as we have not seen since the days of the Huns, the Goths, the Vandals, since the Chmri movement. It is an epoch, my friend! It is fate that is in it."

"So, then, it is a great country?" I asked.

"It is so great, these traders do not wish it known. They wish only that it may be savage; also that their posts and their harems may be undisturbed. That is what they wish. These Scots go wild again, in the wilderness. They trade and they travel, but it is not homes they build. Sir George Simpson wants steel traps and not plows west of the Rockies. That is all!"

"They do not speak so of Dr. McLaughlin," I began tentatively.

"My friend, a great man, McLaughlin, believe me! But he is not McKay; he is not Simpson; he is not Behrens; he is not Colville; he is not Douglas. And I say to you, as I learned last night—you see, they asked me also to tell what I knew of Oregon—I say to you that last night McLaughlin was deposed. He is in charge no more—so soon as they can get word to him, he loses his place at Vancouver."

"After a lifetime in the service!" I commented.

"Yes, after a lifetime, and McLaughlin had brain and heart, too. If England would listen to him, she would learn somethings. He plants, he plows, he has gardens and mills and houses and herds. Yes, if they let McLaughlin alone, they would have a civilization on the Columbia, and not a fur-trading post. Then they could oppose your civilization there. That is what he preaches. Simpson preaches otherwise. Simpson loses Oregon to England, it may be."

"Then you think there is a chance of trouble between our country and England, out there?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## NOTES FROM MEADOWBROOK FARM By William Pitt



Oats are good for poultry.

Warm the water for chickens.

Hogs cannot be raised profitably on corn alone.

Kindness and training should begin with the calf.

The horse will keep itself respectably clean if given a chance.

Of the many varieties of clover the common red is by far the best.

Corn is too fattening for laying hens when kept in close confinement.

Milk rapidly, but do not rush as if you were pumping water, or heaving coal.

Dust which is used for poultry should not be left too long in the houses.

One great essential in getting winter eggs is to make the hens entirely comfortable.

A cow with good digestion will almost invariably bring a generous profit to her owner.

Maximum crops on small farms are more profitable than minimum crops on large farms.

The rapid growth and hardness of the willow makes it almost invaluable on the prairie.

No farmer can afford to buy manure until he has first made use of every pound produced at home.

One of the greatest developments in the field of winter dairying and experimentation has been the silo.

It is very necessary that the dairy cow have a large, strong and well-distended digestive apparatus.

During the past few years more attention has been given to seed selection and improvement by individual farmers.

The active laying breeds of hens must be given more liberty and they do not need as warm houses as we have supposed.

A horse should always be tied to a hitching post with a strong strap or rope which there is no possibility of its breaking.

Where there is no regular system of ventilation, the farmer must, in ventilating the dairy barn, avoid direct drafts on the dairy herd.

The average farmer who keeps two teams of horses should at least keep one team of good large mares, and stallion of the draft type, available.

In some respects a cow is much like a person; she enjoys a good, and comfortable place in which to eat and sleep, possibly as well as the best of us.

About seventy-five per cent. of all the corn produced in the country is grown in the northwestern and middle states, which are known as the corn belt.

Give ducks a place on your farm. They are not hard to raise and a few fowls are more profitable than a great many, when attention is given to their needs.

Poultry as a marketable product has become very scarce and dear the last year or two, and the importance of poultry as a revenue-producer on the farm needs to be emphasized.

Geese are among the most profitable of all fowls to invest in, for they can be kept several years for breeding purposes, and, when your foundation is once laid, there is little expense.

Nothing is gained in grinding feed for the hens. They will do their own grinding if there is plenty of grit available. The trouble is on some farms grinding material is not very plentiful.

Plant cowpeas, but put on at least 300 pounds of phosphate fertilizer per acre and in the fall sow crimson clover on every acre of your corn, also with 300 pounds of fertilizer. If you omit the fertilizer you are wasting your time and money.

Any cow that has freshened in the fall and received good treatment in the winter, can always be depended upon to produce for her owner fully twice as much butter or milk during the calendar year as the cow that is freshened in the springtime.

Plants are made of food.  
Some city men make good farmers.  
A pig needs something through the winter.  
Carefully kept poultry is a dependable source of profit.  
Beef cattle do not require winter quarters as dairy cattle do.  
Earthen water-fountains in the fry-yard are better than tin ones.  
You cannot rush a hog, and as you try it you will get in a year.  
Choose for wheat, wherever possible, ground not in that crop year.  
A little extra attention to the tending of fowls will increase the supply.  
The blackberry will succeed on soil and with an exposure, provided the soil is rich.  
Egg production is not measured much by the quantity as by the quality of the food.  
What the next harvest will be depends largely upon study, thought and planning this winter.  
Strain the milk through a flannel cloth, or through two thicknesses of cheese cloth.  
The relish with which an animal eats its feed has much to do with the effect of that feed on the body.  
The season is at hand when evergreen windbreak is an everlasting good thing to have around.  
Sheets are usually high in price soon as grass comes in the spring, then is the time to turn them loose.  
In order to get the best results a system of drainage, the work to be laid out with a leveling instrument.  
Apple trees should be trimmed to two to three feet from the ground and diseases are not as liable to infect them.  
Bred-to-lay pullets produce eggs, because they are smaller, faster, mature quicker, and they lay earlier.  
Sprouted oats are an excellent substitute for green food. All fowls love them.  
The quantity of milk and butter produced by cows depends in no degree upon the manner in which cows are milked.  
When a hen lays 180 eggs a year an egg for every other working day she is going some, and is pretty near the head of the column.  
The silo not only furnishes an economical storage but it enables the farmer to handle his crops cheaper than by any other method.  
A weak, badly developed and undersized pullet will not make a profitable layer; it is worse than foolishness to imagine she ever will.  
Trees of some kind can be planted that will grow in almost any kind of soil if there is sufficient moisture; the moisture is very essential.  
Our agricultural schools and experiment stations have demonstrated beyond question that grasses are the best on reasonably compact soil.  
Fattened ewes do not sell on a par with wethers because they carry proportionately a greater percentage of offal and a smaller amount of meat.  
The disobedient, unmanageable pig is often made so by an attendant who has no love for or pride in his work nor affection for the animal in his charge.  
A straw stack makes good shelter for a bunch of hogs, because they generally architects enough to build a house of their own if given plenty of straw for material.  
While pork can sometimes be sold at a profit when corn is supplemented with nothing but a concentrated food, still it is not wise to concentrate supplements alone.  
When the cows are standing straight in the stall in the stable their hind feet ought to stand on the edge of the gutter. This is necessary in order to keep the stall clean.  
Clean the hen house regularly through the winter, if not quite so often as you have done during the summer, at least often enough to keep the floor and perches clean and the air sweet.  
A mixture of corn and cob and equal parts by weight would supplement the clover hay and silage nicely. Feed one pound of this mixture for each three pounds of average milk produced; this will give very good results.  
If a calf scours physic it with oil in milk and then give two or three times daily, according to severity, one case, two teaspoonsful of a mixture of one part saltpeter and two parts of powdered catechu, subnitrate bismuth and prepared chalk.